



Wasteland

Francesca Lia Block

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An exquisite novel about the consequences of who we choose to love.

Lex and his sister, Marina, are inseparable. The air they share has always been light and boundless, but suddenly it's weighted down. And now Lex is gone. When the one relationship that cradled her turns out to shatter her sense of self, Marina needs her friend West to help put the pieces back together. But Marina won't feel truly complete until she faces the past that is haunting her.

Highly acclaimed and award-winning author Francesca Lia Block tells the tale of a brother and sister whose loving relationship is too intense for them to bear. With the sensitivity and refinement that Block is known for, she manages to weave together her characters and their lives into this beautiful and thought-provoking tale.

Wasteland Details

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Author : Francesca Lia Block

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From Reader Review Wasteland for online ebook

Ashley Lynne says

It took me quite a while to finish this book because, honestly, I never wanted to pick it up.

The book is written in a beautiful and poetic manner, and for a lot of people, I'm sure that's what they enjoy about the book. But for me, it was like the author was trying way too hard to make every. little. thing sound poetic that she fell short on creating plot and character depth. I mean seriously, the only things I caught from the book were the poetic writing and a very vague sad story of incest. Seriously, the story could've been very well written if the author would have been more concerned about the actual content of the book.

Even so, I am excited to try reading more books by Francesca Lia Block, because I know some of her books are very very popular. I just hope they're not all written like this one.

If you've read this book and love it, or if you just love this author, please don't bash me for my opinion on this book. It is, after all, just my opinion. As if I'm that significant, right? :)

P.S. I initially wanted to give this book one star because of all its faults, but I went ahead and gave it two stars because, even though the poetic writing gets in the way of the storytelling, it is still beautiful when you read individual sentences and phrases.

Terry says

For such a small book, this took me a while to finish. Shifting perspectives between three different points of view, the book reads like a dizzy, drunken dream. Images pop out and then vanish, scenes happen with minimal connection to what came before. As Marina grapples with the loss that is driving her mad, the story comes into focus.

Like most of Block's writing, this is as much an exercise in style as it is in story. If you want a great story, this isn't really it. If you like stretching boundaries and can appreciate a writer's style, this might work for you.

Jadey says

I can't begin to describe how much i adore this book. The language is so delicate and descriptive, i find it utterly absorbing. There's something really haunting in the combination of the controversial theme, (incest), and the way Francesca Lia Block writes. Which i find strangely childlike, yet so vivid and intricate. The sentances all weave into each other. Perfect. Parts of it just read like a song to me. The ending completely broke my heart too

'You were just a boy on a bed in a room, like a kaleidoscope is a tube full of bits of broken glass. But the way I saw you was pieces refracting the light, shifting into an infinite universe of flowers and rainbows and insects and planets, magical dividing cells, pictures no one else knew'.

UH. i just love it.

Tabitha Vohn says

The word that best describes *Wasteland* is:aching. The perils of forbidden love mingle with the more resonant pangs of a soulful bond stronger than love or lust...that is necessary.

What becomes of an individual when someone else becomes "necessary"? Bronte attempts to answer that between Catherine and Heathcliff, Leroux between Christine and the Phantom. Here, Lia Block echoes the sentiment between Marina and Lex. She does so in her usual, brilliant, artful way, weaving in the quiet, mournful backdrop of LA and all of its lost souls.

Wasteland is a tragic love story devoid of any ick factor that might be associated with the conflict. I found it interesting that Block compensated for the idea of incest by making it a tragic misunderstanding; I wonder if the story would have been more impactful if Lex and Marina had been true brother and sister? It surely would have presented a stronger challenge to the reader in making us question our own preconceptions. How do you not feel for two people so achingly in love?

Once again, Block's writing resonates within me long after I've turned the last page, like a beautifully sad symphony I can't get out of my head. But sad songs are the best.

Jaemi says

Marina's relationship with her brother Lex has always been different than that of normal siblings. Therefore, it's not a shock to anyone when she takes his apparent suicide so hard. But there's more to the story than anyone knows. At least, so she thinks.

As Marina delves deeper into the mystery, struggling to understand what happened to her brother, hidden truths come to light. But none so large as those learned when she takes off to visit her father.

This is a story of love: how it can raise you up and pull you down, heal you and break you

Amaryllis says

5 stars for writing / 3 stars for plot

I've always had a fascination with incest as a forbidden love plot. I know that some people find it disturbing (disgusting, even). As far as I'm concerned, I'm fascinated because I think incest probably is the most forbidden form of relationship there is. And you know my love of all things forbidden ;)

Wasteland meets most of the criteria for a good forbidden romance (what makes a forbidden romance a good forbidden romance in *my* opinion anyway).

You can feel how pure and strong the connection between Lex and Marina is from the very first chapter of the story (they are brother and sister).

You can see it, but most of all, you can *feel* it.

Oh God, how you feel it.

There is no way you can miss it.

Sometimes, you feel their love at the most unexpected moments.

Sometimes, when you read *Wasteland*, you come across one sentence, or one phrase, that holds all the power of a thousand words. They hit you where it hurts the most, as suddenly and as brutally as a lightning strike. This is how you know how much Lex loves his sister. He gives away signs of his devotion to her. They are not many, but each time they make an appearance, they are as bright as shooting stars.

These moments when you get a glimpse of the depth of his feelings for her are infinitely precious. Every one of them.

Here are the words that come to my mind when trying to describe Francesca Lia Block's writing: **visual, vivid, lyrical, touching, inspiring, beautifully melancholic, beautifully haunting.**

I only wish the story weren't so short.

Also, I could have done with one or two love scenes. But I know all too well that I am asking for too much xD

There is no doubt however that *Wasteland* has all the makings of a good new adult novel.

There are many quotes from this book that I bookmarked, and will remember forever as my favorites, including the following one:

« **Your whole life you can be told something is wrong and so you believe it. Why should you question it? But then slowly seeds are planted inside of you, one by one, by a touch or a look or a day skateboarding in a park, and they start to unfurl uncurl little green shoots and they start to burst out of old hulls shells and they start to sprout. And pretty soon there are so many of them. They are named Love and Trust and Kindness and Joy and Desire and Wonder and Spirit and Soulmate. They grow into a garden so dense and thick that it starts to invade your brain where the old things you were once told are dying. By the time this garden reaches your brain the old things are dead. They make no sense. The logic of the seeds sprouted inside of you is the only real thing. »**

How can you, after reading such beautiful words, not be overwhelmed by a surge of tenderness, and sadness for Lex and Marina, knowing that their love is impossible?

Kim says

"We keep burning in the brown smog pit. The girls swarm in their black moth dresses. Their scalps are shaved like concentration camp ladies. Rats click my head. Everything broken."

This is how *Wasteland* begins. This is why I love **love** Francesca so much. She uses words good.

When I'm particularly down, I can pick up any of FLB's books and feel light again. Sometimes, that makes me feel icky and not so sure of my mental well being, seeing that her stories usually involve some sort of abuse, whether it being sexual, mental physical, and/or metaphysical. But to be part of the world that she creates is a real treasure. I thank the gods for her.

Open any page, I dare you...

"I looked down at my lap and you knew what it was. You took off your sweatshirt and put it around me. You tied it on my hips. You helped me up. My body sticky and hot. The cramps were roiling, tight pain. You held me against you for a second. I could feel your heart beating through your pilling green-and-white striped gym shirt. I wanted to sink down again into you. If I were you I would be tall and strong and I'd never bleed like this, this shame stain pain of blood every month until I get old. I was old, all of a sudden. I wanted to be a little girl. A little boy."

I mean, I love Judy Blume, but at 13, I would have appreciated this depiction much, much more.

Another:

"We got quiet. The garden was combing her hair and putting on her earrings. The house was full of dancing creatures, not male not female but both, two lovers in one body. The books downstairs were reciting their poetry to each other, rubbing together, whispering through the leather covers. Wine was flowing through the water pipes. You had caught my leaping heart in your hand like a fish."

Okay, time to let you in on a little secret. This story is about incest. Yeppers. She pulled a VC Andrews, a Robert Cormier, a *Cement Garden*...See what I mean about icky? Yeah. Right.

Okay, so why only 3 stars? Not for the language, no, never that. But, I felt that FLB pulled a *Pretty in Pink* on us. You know how that Molly Ringwald character was supposed to end up with Ducky, but she didn't like that one bit and had the ending rewritten to end up with Andrew McCarthy? Yeah, that blows.

So, here we have this really intense subject matter that pulls you in, makes you want to scrub yourself with your louffah *really really* hard and then---- she phones it in! WTF?

Did she lose her edge when she became a mom? Because I'm feeling that she rewrote this and it was so unlike her. Too bad for us.

I still love her, I will *always* love her. She will be rainy days in the Harvard subway station reading *Witch Baby* and snowy days in the mountains reading *The Rose and the Beast*.

She will remind me that this is what I wanted to do and do well.

Jay says

Like most Francesca Lia Block books, I can see why people enjoy it and love it and want to get deep into it. And like most Francesca Lia Block books, this just goes straight over my head.

It's beautiful, yes, and it approaches incest in such a delicate way it could almost be seen as *not* being incest. Everything between Marina and Lex is unsaid. The only time incest is mentioned is when one girl constantly taunts the mourning Marina by saying 'incest is best.'

It's a very small book, my copy only 150 pages, and like most Block books, it has wide margins and a non-Times New Roman font so it's a very short read. It's filled like all Block novels with vivid imagery and touching pictures and lush LA surroundings. And it has complicated, seemingly platonic relationships.

My favourite thing about this novel is that even when it's revealed that Lex was adopted, Marina still views him as her brother. She was raised that way and she saw him in that light- Lex was her brother, full blooded or not. That's what grates me when TV shows reveal that certain people aren't related, so a sexual relationship is okay. No, those people were raised to see each other in a certain light. Removing a moral boundary won't change that history.

But ultimately, I couldn't enjoy this novel as I would have liked, as Block's writing doesn't suit me. I enjoyed the topic and her way of approaching it- it reminded me of *Luna* by Julie Anne Peters in its sympathetic portrayal, but it wasn't in my taste.

Hailey Wheaton says

Personal Response:

I thought that this book was very weird and it was definitely a lot different than any of the other books I've read in the past. Some parts in the book were somewhat challenging to understand because it would switch from when the character was alive to when he was dead. I really liked how this book made me think about things that can happen in other peoples lives.

Plot summary:

Wasteland by Francesca Lia Block started out with the main character, Marina, as a young child remembering when her brother was first born, and how much she loved him. It then fast forwarded to the present time, where her brother, ended up committing suicide. From here on out in the book it is a series of flashbacks that marina had with her brother, Lex. Lex and Marina had a serious connection, which overall drove Lex to kill himself because he knew that he could never "fall in love" with his own sister. At the end of the book Marinas, mom reaches out and tells Marina that one of them was actually adopted, this made Marina's relationship with her mom very tense and catastrophic.

Characterization:

There was not much of a change in Lex because he was not fully in the book and it was mostly just old memories of him. Marina started out as very outgoing and strong in front of Lex when he was still alive, but after he died she became very subtle and shy. Marina soon changed when she started to realize why her brother had killed himself. She reversed herself and grew back to being more outgoing and reaching out to people for help.

Recommendations:

I would recommend this book strictly to the high school level because there are some events that play out for mature teens. I would also say this because you should really be ready to deal with the complicated subject.

Jenn Carr says

This book was so gorgeous that it broke my heart.

"You were just a boy on a bed in a room, like a kaleidoscope is a tube full of bits of broken glass. But the way I saw you was pieces refracting the light, shifting into an infinite universe of flowers and rainbows and insects and planets, magical dividing cells, pictures no one else knew ... Your whole life you can be told something is wrong and so you believe it."

-Wasteland

Haley Ladlee says

When I first picked up this book from the library I thought that it would be somewhat like a trashy love story between a brother and sister. But after reading it, it changed into something not quite like anything I've ever read. Beautifully written with poetry that grips you, I actually had to read this book twice. Its a short story with a lot of impact but switches between characters and half way through the story I realized that there were 3 characters actions I needed to account for, not just one. So though the first time I read it I was quite confused. The second time took me through a heart wrenching journey of love that I did not expect from such a tiny book.

notyourmonkey says

You know, I always think I *should* like Francesca Lia Block, that I *do* like her, and then I read her stuff and am reminded that, no, she's not particularly my cup of tea. She does a lot of interesting things with her narrative structure and the *way* she tells her story, but 1) I don't think her flights of structural fancy always help her tell her story better (which in my mind should be a requirement), 2) they often add an offputting distance between the reader and the characters, and 3) I don't think she always has as much control over them as she thinks she does (see also: #1 and #2). When your structure gets in the way of communication, it needs tweaking.

Or maybe I'm just not 14 anymore. Maybe I've read too much, become too set in my ways, too judgmental to let her brilliance shine down on me. But if my struggle to figure out what's going on, who's who in her books, doesn't ultimately lead to some sort of revelation or insight into those characters (which, for me, that struggle is just a struggle and not an illumination), then it's kind of pointless. There are moments in this book when it *does* help, when it creates a mood or helps you understand how a character is dealing with/processing the events in his or her memory, which just makes those moments when it seems like artifice for artifice's sake seem even more pretentious.

Okay, I think I'm also kind of mad at this book because she punked out. She's got this Ooooh After School

Special Incest OMG OMG OMG FORBIDDEN NO REALLY And Not In The Romeo And Juliet Sense LOVE thing going on, and then she freakin' *punks out* and has one of them be sekritly! adopted!

I'm sorry; that's a V.C. Andrews novel, and whatever my feelings about FLB are, I *know* that she's better than that. She didn't even have West(?) turn out to be Marina's long-lost *real* brother.

If it was an attempt to make Lex's death even more tragic, in my mind it failed. It's too soap opera-y (too, well, V.C. Andrews) in a book that takes a very soap opera idea and treats it very seriously. It makes what comes before rather hollow. It gives it a whole feel of, "oh, if only they had *known!!*", rather than looking at what happens when Marina loses the most important person in the world to her, for reasons, good or bad as you choose, that *involve* her.

Maybe it's an attempt at commentary on the fact that the relationship between them would be deemed wrong because of the way they grew up - i.e. as siblings - rather than their genes - i.e. completely different. That what makes incest incestual is the transgression of a relationship, not of bloodlines. Which is an interesting idea, but if that's what it was, I think the book fails. Instead it's a last-minute d'oh! to which there is no narrative resolution.

I will give the book credit for clearly expressing the idea that, however tragic you choose to see Lex and Marina's relationship in all its levels, a young man's suicide is even more tragic.

Teagan says

Personal Response:

Wasteland by Francesca Lia Block was a confusing book. At first the novel seemed like it would be good because the story took place inside someone's mind, which was interesting. One issue that became apparent was the fact that the characters were not defined at all. Also it was very difficult to determine who was the narrator and understand the gender of Marina's brother, Lex. Another problem was that the novel switched between past and present tenses often, or so it seemed. The entire book didn't have any clear transitions as well. This wasn't a very good book in my opinion.

Plot:

Marina was a teenager who lived her whole life connected to her twin brother, Lex. They did everything together and were inseparable. Marina seemed to be the shyer one of the two and always wanted to follow Lex everywhere. He was her entire life. One day one decision and one person changed Marina's life forever, and Lex was no longer her other half. Marina turned to her close friend, West, who tried to comfort her in those depressing times. He always had her back and never judged her and her choices. Marina was in denial about what had happened to her brother and tried to blame others. She had found a letter from Lex inside her old doll that made her change her mind. She had finally accepted his fate and decided it was time to tell the truth.

Recommendation:

I recommend this book to adults. The reason I recommend it to adults is because it was very confusing to read with the tenses switching and the unclarified narrator. Adults, I would assume, would be able to more easily understand this book. Also, I recommend both genders. I recommend girls to read this book because the main character is a girl and girls could relate to her. I also recommend boys to read this book because the novel is mainly focused on Marina's brother, Lex, who is a boy.

Christina says

This is one of the most beautiful and hauntingly sad love stories I've ever read. I have read it over fifteen times and still, I get the urge to pick it up and read all over again every day. It tells the story of Lex and Marina, a brother and sister with a deep bond that is both beautiful and frightening. Early on the reader can see that the bond proves to be harder and harder for Lex to deal with. Marina's world is turned upside down when her brother commits suicide. The bulk of the story revolves around Marina's journey to find out why her brother committed suicide, coming to terms with what existed between them, and making peace with the haunting of her heart. Francesca Lia Block uses the most whimsical and lush vivid language to save this from being just a raunchy spin on an incestuous relationship. It truly is one of the most heartbreakingly love stories I've ever read.

Cal says

To some people this writing style might be genius- to me it was just unnecessarily confusing with an author screaming "Look at me, I write differently!" The story itself was okay once I finally actually understood what was going on by page 100 (of 150). It would be much easier to read if you went through and actually wrote quotation marks where people were talking.
